

CHRIST AND HIS TABLE COMPANIONS

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*“And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.”
Luke 22:14*

THE outward ordinances of the Christian religion are but two, and those two are exceedingly simple, yet neither of them has escaped human alteration, and alas, much mischief has been wrought and much of precious teaching has been sacrificed by these miserable perversions. For instance, the ordinance of baptism, as it was administered by the apostles, betokened the burial of the believer with Christ, and his rising with his Lord into newness of life. Men must needs exchange immersion for sprinkling, and the intelligent believer for an unconscious child, and so the ordinance is slain.

The other sacred institution, the Lord's supper, like believers' baptism, is simplicity itself. It consists of bread broken, and wine poured out, these viands being eaten and drunk at a festival—a delightful picture of the sufferings of Christ for us, and of the fellowship which the saints have with one another and with Him. But this ordinance also, has been tampered with by men.

By some, the wine has been taken away altogether, or reserved only for a priestly caste, and the simple bread has been changed into a consecrated host. As for the table, the very emblem of fellowship in all nations—for what expresses fellowship better than surrounding a table, and eating and drinking together—this, in truth, must be put away, and an “altar” must be erected, and the bread and wine, which were to help us to remember the Lord Jesus, are changed into an “unbloody sacrifice,” and so the whole thing becomes an unscriptural celebration instead of a holy institution for fellowship.

Let us be warned by these mistakes of others never either to add to or take from the Word of God so much as a single jot or tittle! Keep upon the foundation of the Scriptures, and you stand safely, and have an answer for those who question you, yea, and an answer which you may render at the bar of God, but once allow your own whim, or fancy, or taste, or your notion of what is proper and right to rule you, instead of the Word of God, and you have entered upon a dangerous course, and unless the grace of God prevent, boundless mischief may ensue.

The Bible is our standard authority, none may turn from it. The wise man says in Ecclesiastes, “I counsel thee to keep the King's commandment,” we would repeat his advice, and add to it the sage precept of the mother of our Lord, at Cana, when she said, “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.”

We shall now ask you in contemplation to gaze upon the first celebration of the Lord's supper. You perceive at once that there was no “altar” in that large upper room. There was a table, a table with bread and wine upon it, but no altar, and Jesus did not kneel—there is no sign of that—He sat down, I doubt not, after the Oriental mode of sitting, that is to say, by a partial reclining, He sat down with His apostles.

Now, He who ordained this supper knew how it ought to be observed, and as the first celebration of it was the model for all others, we may be assured that the right way of coming to this communion is to assemble around a table, and to sit or recline while we eat and drink together of bread and wine in remembrance of our Lord.

While we see the Savior sitting down with His twelve apostles, let us inquire first, *what did this make them?* Then, secondly, *what did this imply?* And thirdly, *what further may we legitimately infer from it?*

I. First then, we see the Great Master, the Lord, the King in Zion, sitting down at the table to eat and drink with His twelve apostles—WHAT DID THIS MAKE THEM?

Note what they were at first. By His first calling of them they became His *followers*, for He said unto them, “Follow Me.” That is to say, they were convinced, by sundry marks and signs, that He was the Messiah, and they, therefore, became His followers.

Followers may be at a great distance from their leader, and enjoy little or no communion with him, for the leader may be too great to be approached by the common members of his band. In the case of these disciples, their following was unusually close, for their Master was very condescending, but still, their communion was not always of the most intimate kind at first, and therefore, it was not at the first that He called them to such a festival as this supper.

They began with following, and this is where we must begin. If we cannot enter as yet into closer association with our Lord, we may, at least, know His voice by His Spirit, and follow Him as the sheep follow the shepherd. The most important way of following Him is to trust Him, and then diligently to imitate His example. This is a good beginning, and it will end well, for those who walk with Him today shall rest with Him hereafter, those who tread in His footsteps shall sit with Him on His throne.

Being His followers, they came next to be His *disciples*. A man may have been a follower for a while, and yet may not have reached discipleship. A follower may follow blindly, and hear a great deal which he does not understand, but when he becomes a disciple, his master instructs him, and leads him into truth. To explain, to expound, to solve difficulties, to clear away doubts, and to make truth intelligible is the office of a teacher among his disciples.

Now, it was a very blessed thing for the followers to become disciples, but still disciples are not necessarily so intimate with their Master as to sit and eat with Him. Socrates and Plato knew many in the Academy whom they did not invite to their homes. My brethren, if Jesus had but called us to be His disciples, and no more, we would have had cause for great thankfulness, if we had been allowed to sit at His feet, and had never shared in such an entertainment as that before us, we ought to have been profoundly grateful, but now that He has favored us with a yet higher place, let us never be unfaithful to our discipleship. Let us daily learn of Jesus, let us search the Bible to see what it was that He taught us, and then, by the aid of His Holy Spirit, let us scrupulously obey. Yet is there a something beyond.

Being the Lord’s disciples, the chosen ones next rose to become His *servants*, which is a step in advance, since the disciple may be but a child, but the servant has some strength, has received some measure of training, and renders somewhat in return. Their Master gave them power to preach the Gospel, and to execute commissions of grace, and happy were they to be called to wait upon such a Master, and aid in setting up His kingdom.

My dear brethren and sisters, are you all Christ’s servants consciously? If so, though the service may at times seem heavy because your faith is weak, yet be very thankful that you are servants at all, for it is better to serve God than to reign over all the kingdoms of this world. It is better to be the lowest servant of Christ than to be the greatest of men, and remain slaves to your own lusts, or be mere men-pleasers. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. The servant of such a Master should rejoice in his calling, yet is there something beyond.

Towards the close of His life, our Master revealed the yet nearer relation of His disciples, and uttered words like these, “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you *friends*; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” This is a great step in advance. The friend, however humble, enjoys much familiarity with his friend. The friend is told what the servant need not know. The friend enjoys a communion to which the mere servant, disciple, or follower has not attained.

May we know this higher association, this dearer bond of relationship! May we not be content without the enjoyment of our Master’s friendship! “He that hath friends must show himself friendly,” and if we would have Christ’s friendship, we must befriend His cause, His truth, and His people. He is a Friend that loveth at all times, if you would enjoy His friendship, take care to abide in Him.

Now note that on the night before His Passion, our Lord led His friends a step beyond ordinary friendship. The mere follower does not sit at table with his leader, the disciple does not claim to be a fellow commoner with his master, the servant is seldom entertained at the same table with his lord, the befriended one is not always invited to be a guest, but here the Lord Jesus made His chosen ones to be *His table companions*. He lifted them up to sit with Him at the same table, to eat of the same bread, and drink of the same cup with Himself. From that position He has never degraded them, they were representative men, and where the Lord placed them, He has placed all His saints permanently.

All the Lord's believing people are sitting, by sacred privilege and calling, at the same table with Jesus, for "truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." He has come into our hearts, and He sups with us and we with Him, we are His table companions, and shall eat bread with Him in the kingdom of God.

II. So now we shall pass on, in the second place, to ask, WHAT DID THIS TABLE COMPANIONSHIP IMPLY?

It implied, first of all, *mutual fidelity*. This solemn eating and drinking together was a pledge of faithfulness to one another. It must have been so understood, or otherwise there would have been no force in the complaint, "He that eats bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." Did not this mean that *because* Judas had eaten bread with his Lord, he was bound not to betray Him, and so to lift up his heel against Him? This was the seal of an implied covenant, having eaten together, they were under bond to be faithful to one another.

Now, as many of you as are really the servants and friends of Christ may know that the Lord Jesus, in eating with you at His table, pledges Himself to be faithful to you. The Master never plays the Judas—the Judas is among the disciples. There is nothing traitorous in the Lord, He is not only able to keep that which we have committed to Him, but He is faithful and will do it. He will be faithful, not only as to the great and main matter, but also to every promise He has made.

Know then, assuredly, that your Master would not have asked you to His table to eat bread with Him if He intended to desert you. He has received you as His honored guests, and fed you upon His choicest meat, and thereby He does as good as say to you, "I will never leave you, come what may, and in all times of trial, depression, and temptation, I will be at your right hand, and you shall not be moved, and to the very last you shall prove my faithfulness and truth."

But beloved, you do not understand this supper unless you are also reminded of the faithfulness that is due from you to your Lord, for the feast is common, and the pledge mutual. In eating with Him, you plight your troth to the Crucified. Beloved, how have you kept your pledge during the past? You have eaten bread with Him, and I trust that in your hearts you have never gone so far aside as to lift up your heel against Him, but have you always honored Him as you should?

Have you acted as guests should have done? Can you remember His love to you, and put your love to Him side by side with it, without being ashamed? From this time forth, may the Holy Ghost work in our souls a jealous fidelity to the Well-beloved which shall not permit our hearts to wander from Him, or suffer our zeal for His glory to decline!

Again, remember that there is in this solemn eating and drinking together, a pledge of fidelity between the disciples themselves, as well as between the disciples and their Lord. Judas would have been a traitor if he had betrayed Peter, or John, or James, so when you come to the one table, my brethren, you must henceforth be true to one another. All bickering and jealousies must cease, and a generous and affectionate spirit must rule in every bosom.

If you hear any speak against those with whom you have communed, reckon that as you have eaten bread with them, you are bound to defend their reputations. If any railing accusation is raised against any brother in Christ, reckon that his character is as dear to you as your own. Let a sacred Freemasonry be maintained among us, if I may liken a far higher and more spiritual union to anything which belongs to common life. You are members one of another, see that you fervently love each other with a pure heart. Drinking of the same cup, eating of the same bread, you set forth before the world a token which I

trust is not meant to be a lie. As it truly shows Christ's faithfulness to you, so let it as really typify your faithfulness to Christ, and to one another.

In the next place, eating and drinking together was a token of *mutual confidence*. They, in sitting there together, voluntarily avowed their confidence in each other. Those disciples trusted their Master, they knew He would not mislead or deceive them. They trusted each other also, for when they were told that one of them would betray their Lord, they did not suspect each other, but each one said, "Lord, is it I?" They had much confidence in one another, and the Lord Jesus, as we have seen, had placed great confidence in them by treating them as His friends. He had even trusted them with the great secret of His coming sufferings and death. They were a trustful company who sat at that supper table.

Now, beloved, when you gather around this table, come in the spirit of implicit trustfulness in the Lord Jesus. If you are suffering, do not doubt His love, but believe that He works all things for your good. If you are vexed with cares, prove your confidence by leaving them entirely in your Redeemer's hands. It will not be a festival of fellowship to you if you come here with suspicions about your Master. No, show your confidence as you eat of the bread with Him.

Let there also be a brotherly confidence in each other. Grievous would it be to see a spirit of suspicion and distrust among you. Suspicion is the death of fellowship. The moment one Christian imagines that another thinks hardly of him, though there may not be the slightest truth in that thought, yet straightway the root of bitterness is planted. Let us believe in one another's sincerity, for we may rest assured that each of our brethren deserves to be trusted more than we do.

Turn your suspicions within, and if you must suspect, suspect your own heart, but when you meet with those who have communed with you at this table, say within yourself, "If such can deceive me, and alas! they may, then will I be content to be imposed upon rather than entertain perpetual mistrust of my fellow Christians."

A third meaning of the assembling around the table is this, *hearty fraternity*. Our Lord, in sitting down at the table with His disciples, showed Himself to be one with them, a Brother, indeed. We do not read that there was any order of priority by which their seats were arranged.

Of course, if the Grand Chamberlain at Rome had arranged the table, he would have placed Peter at the right hand of Christ, and the other apostles in graduated positions according to the dignity of their future bishoprics, but all that we know about their order is this, that John sat next to the Savior, and leaned upon His bosom, and that Peter sat a good way off—we feel sure he did, because it is said that he "beckoned" unto John, if he had sat next to him, he would have whispered to him, but he beckoned to him, and so he must have been some way down the table, if indeed, there was any "*down*" or "*up*" in the arrangement of the guests.

We believe the fact was that they sat there on a sacred equality, the Lord Jesus, the Elder Brother, among them, and all else arranged according to those words, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." Let us feel, then, in coming to the table again at this time, that we are linked in ties of sacred relationship with Jesus Christ, who is exalted in heaven, and that through Him our relationship with our fellow Christians is very near and intimate.

Oh, that Christian brotherhood were more real! The very word "brother" has come to be ridiculed as a piece of hypocrisy, and well it may, for it is mostly used as a cant phrase, and in many cases means very little. But it ought to mean something. You have no right to come to that table unless you really feel that those who are washed in Jesus' blood have a claim upon the love of your heart, and the activity of your benevolence

What! are you to live together forever in heaven, and will you show no affection for one another here below? It is your Master's new command that you love one another, will you disregard it? He has given this as the badge of Christians, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples"—not, if you wear a gold cross, but—"if ye have love, one to another." That is the Christian's badge of his being, in very truth, a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Here, at this table, we find fraternity. Whosoever eats of this sacred supper declares himself to be one of a brotherhood in Christ, a brotherhood striving for the same cause, having sincere sympathy, being members of each other, and all of them members of the body of Christ. God make this to be a fact throughout Christendom even now, and how will the world marvel as it cries, “See how these Christians love one another!”

But this table companionship means more yet, it signifies *common enjoyment*. Jesus eats, and they eat, the same bread. He drinks, and they drink, of the same cup. There is no distinction in the viands. What means this? Does it not say to us that the joy of Christ is the joy of His people? Has He not said, “That my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full”? The very joy that delights Christ is that which He prepares for His people. You, if you are a true believer, have sympathy in Christ’s joy, you delight to see His kingdom come, His truth advanced, sinners saved, grace glorified, holiness promoted, God exalted, this also is His delight.

But my dear brethren and fellow professors, are you sure that your chief joy is the same as Christ’s? Are you certain that the mainstay of your life is the same as that which was His meat and His drink, namely, to do the will of the heavenly Father? If not, I am afraid you have no business at this table, but if it is so, and you come to the table, then I pray that you may share the joy of Christ. May you joy in Him as He joys in you, and so may your fellowship be sweet!

Lastly on this point, the feast at the one table indicated *familiar affection*. It is the child’s place to sit at the table with its parents, for there affection rules. It is the place of honor to sit at the table, “Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table.” But the honor is such as love and not fear suggests. Men at the table often reveal their minds more fully than elsewhere. If you want to understand a man, you do not go to see him at the Stock Exchange, or follow him into the market, for there he keeps himself to himself, but you go to his table, and there he reveals himself.

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ sat at the table with His disciples. ’Twas a meal, ’twas a meal of a homely kind, intimate communion ruled the hour. I am afraid, brethren and sisters, we have come to this table sometimes, and gone away again without having had communion with Christ, and then it has been an empty formality, and nothing more. I thank God that coming to this table every Sabbath day, as some of us do, and have done for many years, we have yet for the most part enjoyed the nearest communion with Christ here that we have ever known, and have a thousand times blessed His name for this ordinance.

Still, there is such a thing as only eating the bread and drinking the wine, and losing all the sacred meaning thereof. Do pray the Lord to reveal Himself to you. Ask that it may not be a dead form to you, but that now, in very deed, you may give to Christ your heart, while He shall show to you His hands and His side, and make known to you His agonies and death, wherewith He redeemed you from the wrath to come. All this, and vastly more, is the teaching of the table at which Jesus sat with the twelve.

I have often wondered why the Church of Rome does not buy up all those pictures by one of its most renowned painters, Leonardo da Vinci, in which our Lord is represented as sitting at the table with His disciples, for these are a contradiction of the Popish doctrine on this subject. As long as that picture remains on a wall, and as long as copies of it are spread everywhere, the Church of Rome stands convicted of going against the teaching of the earlier church by setting up an “altar” when she confesses herself, that aforetime, it was not considered to be an altar of sacrifice, but a table of fellowship, at which the Lord did not kneel, nor stand as an officiating priest, but at which He and His disciples sat.

We, at least, have no rebukes to fear from antiquity, for we follow, and mean to follow, the primitive method. Our Lord has given us commandment to do this until He comes—not to alter it, but just to “do this,” and nothing else, in the same manner, until He shall come again.

III. We will draw to a close by asking, WHAT FURTHER MAY BE INFERRED FROM THIS SITTING OF CHRIST WITH HIS DISCIPLES AT THE TABLE?

I answer, first, *there may be inferred from it the equality of all the saints*. There were here twelve apostles. Their apostleship, however, is not concerned in the matter. When the Lord’s supper was

celebrated after all the apostles had gone to heaven, was there to be any alteration because the apostles had gone? Not at all. Believers are to do this in remembrance of their Lord *until He shall come*. There was no command for a change when the first apostles were all gone from the church. No, it was to be the same still—bread and wine and the surrounding of the table, until the Lord came.

I gather, then, the equality of all saints. There is a difference in office, there was a difference in miraculous gift, and there are great differences of growth in grace, but still, in the household of God, all saints, whether apostles, pastors, teachers, deacons, elders, or private members, being all equal, eat at one table. There is but one bread, there is but one juice of the vine here.

It is only in the church of God that those words, so wild politically, can ever be any more than a dream, “Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.” There you have them, where Jesus is, not in a republic, but in the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, where all rule and dominion are vested in Him, and all of us willingly acknowledge Him as our glorious Head, and all we are brethren.

Never fall into the idea that older believers were of a superior nature to ourselves. Do not talk of *Saint Paul*, and *Saint Matthew*, and *Saint Mark*, unless you are prepared to speak of *Saint William* and *Saint Jane* sitting over yonder, for if they are in Christ, they are as truly saints as those first saints were, and I am of the opinion there may be some who have even attained to higher “saintship” than many whom tradition has canonized.

The heights of saintship are by grace open to us all, and the Lord invites us to ascend. Do not think that what the Lord wrought in the early saints cannot be wrought in you. It is because you think so that you do not pray for it, and because you do not pray for it you do not attain it. The grace of God sustained the apostles, that grace is not less today than it was then. The Lord’s arm is not shortened, His power is not straitened.

If we can but believe, and be as earnest as those first saints were, we shall yet subdue kingdoms, and the day shall come when the gods of Hinduism, and the falsehoods of Mohammed, and the lies of Rome, shall as certainly be overthrown as were the ancient philosophies and the classic idolatries of Greece and Rome by the teaching of the first ministers of Christ. There is the same table for you, and the same food is there in emblem, and grace can make you like those holy men, for you are bought with the same blood, and quickened by the same Spirit. Only believe, for “all things are possible to him that believeth.”

Another inference, only to be hinted at, is this, *that the wants of the church in all ages will be the same, and the supplies for the church’s wants will never vary*. There will be the table still, and the table with the same viands upon it—bread still, nothing more than bread for food, wine still, nothing less than wine for drink. The church will always want the same food, the same Christ, the same Gospel. Out on you, traitors, who tell us that we are to shape our Gospel to suit this enlightened nineteenth century! Out on you, false-hearts, who would have us tone down the everlasting truth that shall outlive the sun, and moon, and stars, to suit your boasted culture, which is but varnished ignorance!

No, that truth, which of old was mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, is mighty still, and we will maintain it to the death, the church needs the doctrines of grace today as much as when Paul, or Augustine, or Calvin preached them, the church needs justification by faith, the substitutionary atonement, and regeneration, and divine sovereignty to be preached from her pulpits as much as in days of yore, and by God’s grace she shall have them too.

Lastly, there is in this truth, that Christ has brought all His disciples into the position of table companions, *a prophecy that this shall be the portion of all His people forever*. In heaven there cannot be less of privilege than on earth. It cannot be that in the celestial state, believers will be degraded from what they have been below. What were they, then, below? Table companions. What shall they be in heaven above? Table companions still, and blessed are they that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. “Many shall come from the East and from the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God,” and the Lord Jesus shall be at the head of the table.

Now, what will His table of joy be? Set your imagination to work, and think what will be His festival of soul when His reward shall be all before Him, and His triumph all achieved. Have ye

imagined it? Can ye conceive it? Whatever it is, you shall share in it. I repeat those words, whatever it is, the least believer shall share in it. You, poor working woman, oh, what a change for you, to sit among the princes of Christ's palace of glory, near to your Lord, all your toil and want forever ended!

And you, sad child of suffering, scarcely able to come up to the assembly of God's people, and going back, perhaps, to that bed of languishing again, you shall have no pains there, but you shall be forever with the Lord. In the anticipation of the joy that shall be yours, forget your present troubles, rise superior to the difficulties of the hour, and if you cannot rejoice in the present, yet rejoice in the future, which shall so soon be your own.

We finish with this word of deep regret—regret that many here cannot understand what we have been talking about, and have no part in it. There are some of you who must not come to the table of communion because you do not love Christ. You have not trusted Him, you have no part in Him. There is no salvation in what some people call “sacraments.” Believe me, they are but delusions to those who do not come to Christ with their heart. You must not come to the outward sign if you have not the thing signified. Here is the way of salvation, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

To believe in Him is to trust Him, to use an old word, it is recumbency, it is leaning on Him, resting on Him. Here I lean on this platform rail. I rest my whole weight on this support before me, do so with Christ in a spiritual sense, lean on Him. You have a load of sin, lean on Him, sin and all. You are all unworthy, and weak, and perhaps miserable, then cast on Him the weakness, the unworthiness, the misery and all. Take Him to be all in all to you, and when you have thus trusted Him, you will have become His follower, go on by humility to be His disciple, by obedience to be His servant, by love to be His friend, and by communion to be His table companion.

May the Holy Spirit so lead you, for Jesus sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

LUKE 22:7-54

Verses 7-13. *Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the good man of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.*

The hour of Christ's humiliation was drawing nigh, but He was still “The Master.” He had but to send His servants, and His request was at once obeyed, just as He might have asked for more than twelve legions of angels, and they would have been immediately placed at His disposal.

14-22. *And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.*

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!

What consternation those sentences must have caused in that little company! Christ and His twelve apostles alone present, yet one of them was about to betray his Lord!

23-24. *And they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.*

How strange that such a quarrel should be going on just then! Their Master was going out to betrayal and crucifixion for them, yet they were disputing about which of them “should be accounted the greatest.”

25-30 *And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

What folly and sin to quarrel about earthly precedence when such heavenly honors were awaiting them!

31-32. *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*

Trial would be general to all the apostles, “Satan hath desired to have you,” but the danger would be special to Peter on account of his tendency to presumptuous zeal, “‘I have prayed for thee.’ Your danger will be that, after having transgressed, your faith will fail, so I have specially prayed about that. Where your greatest danger lies, there have I planted My batteries of prayer, ‘I have prayed for thee, that your faith fail not.’”

33. *And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.*

And I have no doubt that he thought he was ready to do all this, he spoke out of the fullness of his heart, but he did not know the weakness of his flesh. We are all too apt to promise great things, and to fail in the fulfillment of them.

34-36. *And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that has a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.*

At first, our Savior had great popularity amongst the people, and under the cover of this, His disciples were received with respect and kindness so that, though they went forth without purse or scrip, they lacked nothing. But now, Christ warns them that there is to be a very different state of things. Jesus is about to die, and people will not be ready to entertain them, they will need to have a purse and scrip of their own. They will constantly be in peril of their lives, and they will need the sword now, and the scrip. This is all that the Savior meant.

37. *For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.*

“They are drawing to their close. I am about to be put to death as a transgressor, and you will be treated as though you were the off-scouring of all things, and were not fit to live, because you are my followers.”

38. *And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.*

A smile must have passed over the Savior’s face as He saw how egregiously they had misunderstood Him. He did not mean that they should literally carry swords, but that they should now have to go through an alien world, and to meet with no friends or helpers. He evidently did not mean that they were to defend Him with the sword, for two such weapons would not have been “enough” against the Roman legionaries who were sent to seize Him. How apt they were to misconstrue, and take literally that which

He was accustomed to speak in figures, just as, to this day, some will have it that the bread on the communion table is Christ's body and the juice of the vine is His blood.

39-40. *And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.*

"There is a peculiar temptation coming upon you. I have taught you to pray every day, 'Lead us not into temptation,' but tonight make very special use of that petition, 'Pray that ye enter not into temptation.'"

41-44. *And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

Was He heard? Ah, my brethren He was indeed heard, but especially in that part of His prayer, "nevertheless not my will, but thine be done," and that was the most vital part of His prayer, for as much as He shrank from that bitter cup, still more did He shrink from any thought of going contrary to the will of His Father. That ought to be the heart of all our prayers, whatever we are asking for, chiefly and above all else this should be our cry, "nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

45-46. *And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.*

There must have been some very peculiar temptation about that night, that Christ's disciples should have needed to be again and again commanded to pray this prayer.

47-50. *And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?*

And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.

No doubt he meant to cut his head in twain, but the sword slipped, and merely took away his right ear.

51. *And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.*

There was no lasting mischief done, but on the contrary, another instance given of the divine power of Christ. No other miracle of this kind is mentioned in Scripture, I mean, the healing of a wound received by violence, the restoration of a member which had been cut off, and Luke is the only Evangelist who mentions it—it has been thought that because he was a physician, and had a quick eye for acts of healing, that he mentions that Christ touched the ear of Malchus, and healed him.

52-54. *Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.*

Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.

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